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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002125

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S JUNE 2 MEETING WITH PRIME  
MINISTER ASO

Classified By: DCM James P. Zumwalt per reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The United States and its Allies have reached an "inflection point" and need a new strategy to convince Pyongyang to change, visiting DepSec told PM Taro Aso during a June 1 meeting in Tokyo. Steinberg said he plans to tell the PRC that unless the North Korea agrees to change its behavior, the U.S., Japan and South Korea will have no choice but to take steps to enhance their security in ways that China will likely see as having an impact on China's security. Aso agreed the Chinese play the most important role in influencing the DPRK. The PM advocated using the UNSC to step up international pressure on Pyongyang through increased financial sanctions, and recommended the U.S. and Japan should strengthen their bilateral alliance. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Aso expressed thanks to the delegation for coming to Tokyo for consultations after his call to President Obama. The PM said he had spoken to President Obama about the DPRK, during which time he mentioned the importance of the United States and Japan working together. Aso said North Korea was an even more serious problem than Iran because Pyongyang has already tested a nuclear device. The DPRK's threat to Northeast Asia is far greater than that of Iran to the Middle East.

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U.S. at Inflection Point  
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¶3. (C) Steinberg extended his congratulations on Aso becoming Prime Minister, noting that on the Deputy Secretary's last trip to Japan, he had been an out-of-government academic and Aso was foreign minister. Introducing the large interagency U.S. delegation, the Deputy said the size of the contingent reflects the size of the challenge.

¶4. (C) Steinberg made three points:

-- The U.S. and Japan share a common view of the nature of the threat posed by North Korea to Northeast Asian security.

-- We have reached an "inflection point" and need a new strategy to convince Pyongyang to change. If the DPRK will not change, we will need to take steps to enhance our security in the face of the threat.

-- We must persuade China that it needs a new approach to North Korea. Beijing worries that pressing Pyongyang will lead to instability. We need to make clear to the PRC that unless the DPRK changes, the U.S., Japan and South Korea will take steps to enhance our security that will have an impact on China's security. Therefore, it is in Beijing's interest to persuade North Korea to change.

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China's Role Important  
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15. (C) PM Aso said he basically agreed with Steinberg. We must remember that the Korean War never ended. Therefore, the DPRK does not think the war is over, rather they believe it could start again anytime. The ROK now has a big advantage in conventional forces, so it is natural for the DPRK to consider the nuclear option. Without nuclear weapons, North Korea is just a poor country. It fears that without nuclear weapons, they will be defeated by the U.S.

16. (C) Aso continued the Chinese role is the most important in influencing the DPRK. Beijing does not want North Korea to become like South Korea ) it wants to maintain the status quo. If the DPRK fails, refugees cross into China. Therefore, we have placed more PLA forces along the border. Also, many refugees will go to the ROK as well. Unfortunately, this would place a huge burden on the ROK.

17. (C) Accordingly, we must consider what to tell the PRC, the PM related. Aso outlined three main points:

-- The UNSC should use international pressure to strengthen its efforts. Any new UNSC resolution should include additional sanctions ) the financial sanctions taken against Banco Delta Asia were very effective. Such sanctions can be done without the need for additional laws, but by strengthening regulations.

-- The U.S. and Japan should strengthen their bilateral alliance. China will not like this. But President Obama promised to support this, Aso asserted.

-- Until ten years ago, Japanese public opinion thought of me

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as a rightist, Aso said, but now I have become more main stream. I have not changed, but Japanese public opinion has become more hawkish. Many in Japan are saying Tokyo should obtain offensive weapons. This shift in Japanese public opinion was accelerated by provocative North Korean actions.

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Steps Affect China's Security  
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18. (C) The DepSec said he agreed with point one; China's first choice is to have a DPRK without nuclear weapons. However, unless we put more pressure on the DPRK, that choice is not available. The PRC's remaining choices are for a nuclear armed and dangerous North Korea or taking stronger measures that might destabilize the regime and lead to more refugees. Steinberg likewise concurred with points two and three, noting that if the international community fails to persuade the DPRK to give up its nuclear program, we will need to take steps. Those steps will not be aimed at China, but could affect the security environment for Beijing. The U.S. is fully committed to strengthening the trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK relationship, the DepSec added.

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Bosworth Reviews U.S. Objectives  
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19. (C) At the DepSec's request, SR Bosworth outlined the U.S. diplomatic approach with regard to North Korea should it change its policy:

-- Our objective is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

-- The U.S. may need to develop an imaginative formula to accomplish this task in an irreversible way.

-- The U.S. is prepared to engage bilaterally, but within a multilateral framework because: a) we are obligated to support our allies, and b) we have more effective talks if we act together than if we act alone.

-- The Five Parties must review its strategy regarding: a) the principle of action-for-action - irreversibility, and b) we may need to discuss a permanent peace arrangement for the peninsula.

-- Washington will fully consult with the Japanese Government.

¶10. (C) On June 2, PM Aso sent a three-four page letter to Embassy Tokyo outlining his views on what the PM believes are growing differences between the Kim Jong-il Administration and the DPRK military. The PM's office asked that the letter be sent to Deputy Secretary as a follow-up to the June 1 discussion. Embassy forwarded the letter by classified facsimile (Ref A).

¶11. (U) The Deputy Secretary cleared this cable.  
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